

February 22, 2022

Testimony Regarding HB 5037 - Dental Reimbursement Rates

Emily DeLorenzo

Senators Kushner, Cicarella, Osten, Hartley, and Miner, Representatives Abercrombie, Betts, Walker, Dathan, Nolan, and France, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Emily DeLorenzo and I am a registered voter in Westbrook, Connecticut 06498.

I am testifying in my role as a Dental Hygiene student at Tunxis Community College.

The proposed increased reimbursement rates for adults seeking dental treatment on HUSKY are greatly appreciated, especially the proposed endodontic rate matching the children's rate. However, we are concerned the 25% increase is too small to increase provider participation. **In order to increase provider participation in Medicaid, adult dental reimbursement rates need to be increased to parity with the child rates.**

I have been in contact with many individuals who do not have access to preventative dental care because local dentists do not accept Medicaid based on the poor reimbursement rates. Instead, many of them have reached out to me, because I am in a dental hygiene program, complaining of excruciating pain from a frank cavity that could have been treated and even prevented. Many people do not have access to a Community Health Center to make up for the local dentists not accepting them because of transportation, work obligations or scheduling reasons. This needs to change and we need to have a greater effort in providing acceptable dental coverage to low income families and individuals.

Considering that 2 out of 3 adults on HUSKY do not access dental care, many because they cannot find a dentist, and the average amount of time to wait for a root canal is 4 months, that is a barrier to care that is unacceptable! The dental Medicaid rates have not been increased in 14 years and access to a comprehensive adult service has the potential to be a huge financial burden to so many low income families. This needs to change and we need it now!

I urge you to increase the adult Medicaid reimbursement rates to bring them to parity with the child Medicaid rates. This will allow family dental practices to accept Medicaid patients of all ages, expanding the network and improving access to care.

We look forward to continuing this conversation about how we can best provide comprehensive dental care to Connecticut's low-income residents. Thank you for your time and for supporting access to care in Connecticut.

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